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Bourgmont, Explorer of the Missouri, 1698-1725

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positive change in Iowa history education if the newly suggested curriculum is widely implemented in Iowa.

The more students know about Iowa's past, the better they can fit into Iowa's future. Ralph Nader, in a discussion of American education, said the single most important course for today's students is state and local history. He insisted that students need a sense of roots, of belonging somewhere, to be able to build a future. With the aid of a good teacher, *Iowa, Past to Present* can give students that sense of belonging to Iowa and the enthusiasm for Iowa that our young people need. *Iowa, Past to Present* is a big step forward in the revitalization of the teaching of state and local history in Iowa's classrooms. One hopes this text will encourage the production of materials about ordinary Iowans through time for classroom use. But I think I will miss Kate Shelley.

Bourgmont, Explorer of the Missouri, 1698-1725, by Frank Norall. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988. ix, 192 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$18.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ROGER L. NICHOLS, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

This slender volume traces the career of Etienne de Véniard, sieur de Bourgmont, in North America. The subject was born in a Normandy village in 1679. In 1698 he was convicted of poaching game from the lands of a nearby monastery. Apparently to escape punishment, he fled to New France, where he enlisted in the *Troupes de la Marine*, the French force used to defend the colony. By 1706 he had been promoted to the rank of ensign. Early that same year he went west to assume temporary command of the garrison at Detroit. When he arrived, he learned that most of the soldiers had deserted and that someone had sold or traded nearly all of the gunpowder to the Indians. Working to keep peace among the quarreling Indians with neither adequate manpower nor presents for the village leaders, he was unable to prevent violence. His superiors blamed Bourgmont for the deaths of several Frenchmen during a battle between contending groups of Indians, so he deserted Detroit and lived among the Indians as a trader for some years.

By 1712 he had gone to live among the Missouri tribe, fathering a son while there as well as learning the tribe's language and earning their respect and cooperation. Although still under a cloud because of his conduct at Detroit, Bourgmont traveled to Louisiana to get support for an expedition up the Missouri River. The author suggests that his

success in that venture brought calls for his pardon. Although the author offers little evidence to support this idea, that is what happened. During 1713-14 Bourgmont did travel up the Missouri. His careful description resulted in the first accurate French map of the river south of the Platte.

In 1718 Governor Bienville asked the French government to award the Cross of St. Louis to Bourgmont for his important service in Louisiana. Bourgmont received the award in 1720 while in France. Unfortunately, the author is not able to show what actions deserved such an honor, other than to suggest that the explorer's efforts to forge alliances with the Missouri, Oto, and Illinois tribes may have been part of the story.

Several years later Bourgmont led an expedition on to the southern plains to make peace with the Padouca Indians (Plains Apaches). Having succeeded, he led a small delegation of tribal leaders back to France in 1724 for an audience with King Louis XV, who elevated him to the lower nobility. Bourgmont spent the last years of his life in France.

Despite his serious research, the author is unable to fill in many significant gaps about Bourgmont. We learn little of his family, education, wealth, or, in particular, his motivations. What we have is an outline of actions and his dim shadow flitting across some of the pages. The narrative is clear and well written, but it has little significance. Bourgmont's chief accomplishments seem to have been his trip to make peace with the Padoucas, and his careful description of the lower Missouri River valley. His actions among the Padoucas in 1723 faded quickly as the hoped-for trade with Spain never materialized, and the Padoucas fled from the region to escape from the Comanches. That leaves his journal of the expedition, included as an appendix, his description of Louisiana, and the so-called "Route" narrative tracing the river and describing the tribes living along parts of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. This book offers midwestern readers a tantalizing glimpse of French exploration, trade, and diplomacy among the Indians, which seems to be all that the sources would allow.

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